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C.I.A. Aide Says Agency Will Let Scholars Acknowledge Backing

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG

Special to The New York Times

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Feb. 13 — A senior official of the Central Intelligence Agency said tonight that the agency had relaxed rules that had barred professors from publicly acknowledging the C.I.A.'s support for their research.

Robert M. Gates, deputy director of the agency in charge of intelligence, said at Harvard that such arrangements could still be kept secret by the scholar involved or by the agency if the C.I.A. decided its "formal association" with the topic would damage the United States.

His appearance here came against a backdrop of growing controversy at Harvard and elsewhere over the intelligence agency's relationship with campuses. Two months ago a report by an official at Harvard concluded that a senior professor there, Nadav Safran, then director of the university's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, had violated university rules when he organized a conference on Islamic fundamentalism, sponsored by the C.I.A. at Harvard last fall without telling the confere

"At some point, courage is called for," Mr. Gates said. "The freedom of those who do not wish to consult with us can be infringed upon by the fears of their colleagues. We do not believe that working with government to help bring about better informed policy is shameful; indeed, it should be a source of pride and satisfaction."

Mr. Gates said the long history of cooperation between the C.I.A. and universities, particularly Harvard, was interrupted during the domestic turmoil over Vietnam, but resumed in the last decade as the agency faced increasingly diverse demands for research and analysis.

He said the C.I.A. sought out academic experts to sharpen its analysis of world issues, not subvert or change the course of debate in universities. "We are looking for people to challenge our views, to argue with us, to criticize our assessments constructively, to make us think and defend and to go back to the drawing board when we have missed something important," he said

